

EPA-PNL-789

Jeff Frithsen/DC/USEPA/US

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To Rebecca Aicher, Heather Dean, Joe Ebersole, Sheila Eckman, Jeff Frithsen, Michael Kravitz, Phil North, Kate Schofield, Glenn Suter, Jason Todd, Jim Wigington, "Blair, Gregory", "DANIEL RINELLA", jrice, sseville, Barbara Butler, Bob Seal, Chip McConnaha, Cindi Godsey, David Bauer, Greg Summers, Jenny Thomas, Judy Smith, Ken Rock, Lorraine Edmond, Mark Matthies, Marty Bozeman, Michael Wiedmer, Palmer Hough, Rachel Fertik, Rick Parkin, Tami Fordham, Ralph.Grismala

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Subject Fw: Greenwire: Peer reviewers ask EPA to do more work on watershed assessment

Just FYI.....

The radio station in AK and Cordova Times are also also working on stories. AP is working on a longer story.

[AP: EPA review of Bristol Bay watershed to get another review by experts](#)

[Greenwire: Peer reviewers ask EPA to do more work on watershed assessment](#)

Peer reviewers ask EPA to do more work on watershed assessment

Manuel Quinones, E&E reporter

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Twelve scientists and engineers who've reviewed U.S. EPA's draft assessment of a sprawling mine project's environmental impacts in southwestern Alaska are urging the agency to do more before making the report final.

At issue is the draft released by EPA last May that warned that a large mine -- such as Pebble LP's potential gold and copper project -- would likely pose a threat to the Bristol Bay watershed and the world's largest sockeye salmon fishery ([E&ENews PM](#), May 18).

The peer review of EPA's draft -- dated Sept. 17 and quietly posted on the agency website today -- calls on the agency to clarify the report's purpose and what decisions it could support. Mining proponents worry EPA is setting up a justification for blocking all or part of the Pebble mine.

The reviewers, who were selected by EPA contractor Versar Inc., also asked the agency to clarify the geographic scope of its study, to analyze all potentially affected waterways and to widen its consideration of wildlife impacts.

They also requested that EPA explain how it selected the "hypothetical mine scenario" that is the basis for the draft.

"Consider adopting a broader range of mine scenarios, especially smaller mine sizes, than the ones presented in the report," the 193-page review says.

Pebble and its allies in Congress have criticized EPA for conducting the watershed assessment in the first place, wanting instead to allow the standard permitting process to move forward. CEO John Shively has also called the agency's study rushed and flawed.

"The peer review lays some significant deficiencies in the assessment," said Robert Dillon, spokesman for Alaska Sen. Lisa Murkowski, top Republican on the Energy and Natural Resources Committee. He added, "It's disturbing that the EPA is considering pre-emptively vetoing a project on state land."

Mine opponents say peer reviewers verified many of their concerns.

"The peer review report underscores what we've known all along," said Tim Bristol of Trout Unlimited. "Mining on the scope and scale of Pebble simply cannot coexist with Bristol Bay's fish. We call on President Obama to implement necessary protections for this sportsman's paradise."

EPA said it is already working to incorporate many peer review recommendations. It is also convening a panel of experts to review its revised watershed assessment draft.

"The quality of our science is vital to the credibility of EPA's decisions and ultimately the agency's effectiveness in protecting human health and the environment," the agency said on its Bristol Bay Web page. "EPA's peer review process is open, transparent, and is designed to gather expert, knowledgeable input to ensure that EPA's products are based upon defensible, high quality science."

EPA has not said when it intends to release the final watershed assessment.